

The Feature

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies

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Mazrim, Mann Detail Project

IFFS, Guests Get Inside Look at Birkbeck Dig

Details of the recent archaeological excavation conducted at the site of the Morris Birkbeck House in Edwards County in southeastern Illinois were shared with IFFS members and guests at a recent IFFS meeting held at the Bluestem Bakery in Elkhart, adjacent to the Sangamo Archaeological Center. The October 20 program included presentations by the Center's Robert Mazrim and IFFS board chairman Curtis Mann.

In September 2005, Mazrim and a team from the Sangamo Archaeological Center dug three test units into the cellar of the Birkbeck house to determine the boundaries of the cellar and gather a good sample of artifacts.

An earlier survey established the location of the house site as well as several other sites in the extinct village of Wanborough that Birkbeck established in 1819. High water levels prevented any serious excavating on any of the sites. A decision was made to return to the site of the Birkbeck House and dig there using the limited amount of funds provided by the Foundation. The team, working in difficult soil conditions because of the summer drought, was able to determine the south, east and west boundaries of the cellar. Test Unit 1 was located near the southeast corner of the cellar. A large amount of brick rubble was found in this unit, indicating a chimney was pushed into the cellar as the house was demolished.

Test Unit 2 was placed in the middle of the cellar in order to gather artifacts. Test Unit 3, on the west boundary wall, revealed evidence of the steps that once lead into cellar. This unit also produced the largest amount of artifacts.

Mann provided a brief history about Morris Birkbeck and the establishment of the English settlement in 1817. He also commented on the background about the archaeological dig that was conducted in September. Mazrim explained the methods used to find the test units at the Morris Birkbeck.

Mazrim went onto discuss some of the artifacts found in the excavation. Among the unique finds of the excavation was a large amount of Cantonese porcelain. Uncommon on the Illinois frontier, this type of porcelain was brought with Birkbeck from England. Other interesting artifacts included French porcelain and pottery, buttons and a large number of unused gunflints that were apparently dumped into the cellar as it was being filled in.

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From the President's Desk.....Curtis Mann

The last couple of months have been very exciting for the IFFS.

We sponsored a three-day archaeological investigation of the site of the Morris Birkbeck house in Edwards County, Illinois in September and then presented some of the results at a program held at the Under the Prairie Museum in Elkhart.

An excellent article about the program written by Lisa Kernek appeared in *The State Journal-Register*. The program may be given again early next year for those IFFS members and guests who were unable to attend.

Robert Mazrim and I are currently preparing the artifacts and research for a bulletin that will come out next year.

More money is being raised to replenish the Wanborough fund so that further investigations can be conducted on the site of this important early Illinois village.

Our charter membership drive ended in September. A general membership drive is currently ongoing with individual memberships costing \$30. These membership fees remain our principal source of revenue for funding Foundation activities and programs. IFFS continues to wait for word from the IRS regarding its application for nonprofit status that could be several months away according to an IRS representative. I would like current members to encourage interested people to join IFFS.

The IFFS website continues to grow under the direction of webmaster Roger Whitaker. We have posted the Lisa Kernek article about Wanborough along with photographs taken on the September dig. Several links provide background information about Wanborough and the English Settlement.

The Foundation will be celebrating its one year anniversary this month. I encourage IFFS members to contact me at 753-4900 with any questions or suggestions they might have about directions the Foundation can go.

IFFS, Guests Get Details of Birkbeck Dig

(Continued from page 1)

The SAC team was unable to reach the bottom of any of the test units because of time and money constraints as well as the soil condition. Mann indicated that he would like to go back down early next spring to reach the floor of the cellar in at least one of the test units to get more artifact samples. These samples added to what was collected in September will be analyzed and written up into a report about the dig and history of the Birkbeck house.

Further donations and grants will be needed in order for work to continue on this project.

The Feature is the quarterly newsletter of the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies,

Box 1834, Springfield, 62706.

IFFS Officers and Directors, 2005-2006

Curtis Mann, *president*, David M. Brady, *treasurer*

Directors: Elaine Birch, Bob Church, William Furry, Roger Whitaker, Vicky Whitaker

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Did You Know?

Sangamo Town Had Brief Run As A River Port

For part of its brief existence, the village of Sangamo Town on the Sangamon River northwest of Springfield served as a shipping port for commodities headed to markets in St. Louis and New Orleans. The most well known story of its use as a river port is about Abraham Lincoln building a flatboat there and later getting it stuck on the dam at New Salem, thus introducing Lincoln to that village.

The earliest record of departure from Sangamo Town appeared in the *Sangamo Spectator*, the first newspaper in Springfield, in 1827. Storekeeper Ebenezer Brigham, having caught lead fever, announced his intention to leave the village for the mines at Galena, Illinois. The ad read “*For the Lead Mines*” “*The Keel Boat Good Luck will leave Sangamo Town for the Lead Mines as soon as the river opens.*” Brigham did eventually leave and became one of the early settlers of Wisconsin.

Gatton & Enos, a Springfield firm, is also known to have used Sangamo Town on at least two occasions in 1828. The company’s papers, located in the manuscript division of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, provide details of two boat loads of commodities shipped for sale in St. Louis. Insurance papers for a flatboat known as Sangamo No. 1 which was owned by Gatton & Enos describe the boat as being 55 feet in length by 16 feet in breadth. The boat was loaded at Sangamo Town with 107 barrels of Army pork, 30 barrels of prime pork and 50 kegs of lard. “Army pork” was meat packed to be sold on contract to the federal government. The boat was scheduled to leave Sangamo Town between the 10th and 16th of March 1828 bound for the port of St. Louis. Another load of pork, lard and hemp was to be picked up at Beards Ferry, today’s Beardstown, on the way down the Illinois River. The total value of the cargo was \$2,010 which is \$32,760 in today’s money, hence the need for insurance. Gatton & Enos paid \$22.50 for sundry expenses at Sangamon Town and Beards Ferry as well as provisions and hiring of boat hands. The Sangamon No. 1 arrived in St. Louis safely with cargo intact. However, St. Louis commission merchants complained that the Army pork was not packed correctly and would be required to be repacked. The lard kegs were also required to worked on as well.

Very little is known about the second boat load from Sangamo Town. Correspondence from St. Louis merchants indicate a keelboat also named Sangamo arrived in May of 1828 with 46 barrels of flour manufactured at John Broadwell’s mill on Richland Creek. Gatton & Enos purchased wheat at Broadwell’s mill as well as the Clark mill on the South Fork of the Sangamon River to be ground into flour.

Gatton & Enos use of Sangamo Town ended by October 1828 when the firm dissolved. It is likely that Sangamo Town was used by others to launch flatboats or keelboats for several years after before the town was abandoned and returned to farmland.

Iles Store Bulletin Now Available

The Sangamo Archaeological Center has released the latest in its bulletin series: a report on the archaeological salvage project conducted on the site of the Elijah Iles Store in 2003. Elijah Iles opened the first store in Springfield in 1821 at the southeast corner of 2nd and Jefferson Streets.

Two features and artifacts found as a result of the excavation appear to date from the era when Iles was a storekeeper. Information about the archaeology and artifacts as well as an updated history of the founding of Springfield is available in this bulletin. The report, called “The Beginnings of a State Capital, Archaeological Excavations at the Elijah Iles Store Site in Springfield, Illinois,” can be purchased at the Under the Prairie Museum bookstore or at Prairie Archives in downtown Springfield. The cost is \$12.

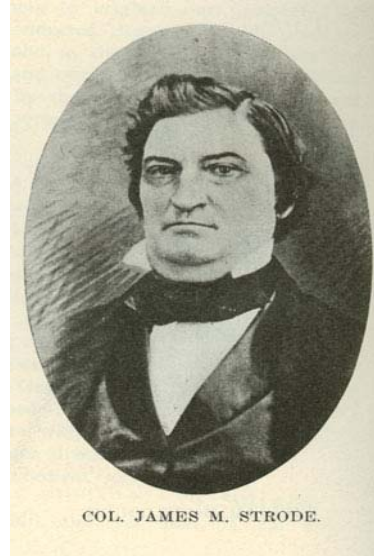
A Springfield Lawyer Goes to War (Briefly)

On July 20, 1827 Springfield attorney James M. Strode was one of several hundred Sangamon County men called up by Governor Ninian Edwards to protect miners in the Galena lead mining region from members of a band of Winnebago Indians.

The miners were alarmed because the Winnebagoes had already murdered two men near Prairie Du Chien and attacked two keel-boats, killing two crew members.

Four companies of infantry and one of calvary were formed in Springfield for the march to Galena.

Strode enlisted as a private in the infantry company commanded by Captain Bowling Green.



Peoria, July 31, 1827

Dear Sir,

Offer my respects to you and your family. I am sorry that we have been so delayed which I attribute to mismanagement. A few days since there was a great murmuring in the camp in so much that fears were entertained of mutiny and when the Morgan troops came on, the discontent increased about the staff appointment. They insisted on a share of the staff but all is happily compromised. Neale gave one of them the second mates place and Quarter Master sergeant place was given to another of hem. We march tomorrow to the mines and do not much expect any opposition. Our effective force is about 400. The Indians are still besieging Prairie du Chen; some Indians of an unknown language and tribe have late been in the neighborhood of the Illinois Rapids and have offered pipes to the Pottawatomies to join them which the latter refused. This came down by express. It is generally supposed that nothing important will be affected in this campaign but it is expected this fall that military operations will be carried on more extensively and with more effect. I wish you sir, to pay some attention to our property. Try to keep it together and see some little about my dogs if you please. Any favor that I can do for you will be done as a requital with pleasure.

Yours,
J.M. Strode

IFFS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I'd like to become a member of the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies. Enclosed is my check for \$30 made out to the Illinois Foundation for Frontier Studies. (Please mail this form and your check to: IFFS, Box 1834, Springfield, IL 62706. (If you prefer, you can fill out an application on line and pay electronically at our website, www.illinoisfrontier.org using Paypal. If you have any questions, please call Curtis Mann at 217-753-4900, ext. 235.

Today's date: _____

Name: _____

Street or Postal Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: (office) _____ (home) _____ (cell) _____

e-mail address: _____ fax: _____

I would prefer to receive the IFFS newsletter by regular mail.